

THE WEB OF GOVERNMENT

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GOVERNMENT

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Foreword

Now man, having a share of the divine attributes, was at first the only one of the animals who had any gods, because he alone was of their kindred; and he would raise altars and images of them. He was not long in inventing articulate speech and names; and he also constructed houses and clothes and shoes and beds, and drew sustenance from the earth. . . . After a while the desire of self-preservation gathered men into cities; but when they were gathered together, having no art of government, they evil intreated one another, and were again in process of dispersion and destruction. Zeus feared that the entire race would be exterminated, and so he sent Hermes to them, bearing reverence and justice to be the ordering principles of cities and the bonds of friendship and conciliation. Hermes asked Zeus how he should impart justice and reverence among men:—Should he distribute them as the arts are distributed; that is to say, to a favoured few only, one skilled individual having enough of medicine or of any other art for many unskilled ones? “Shall this be the manner in which I am to distribute justice and reverence among men, or shall I give them to all?” “To all,” said Zeus; “I should like them all to have a share; for cities cannot exist, if a few only share in the virtues, as in the arts.”

—PLATO, *Protagoras*, 322 (Jowett translation).

Contents

PART ONE

THE EMERGENCE OF GOVERNMENT

	PAGE
FOREWORD	V
CHAPTER	
I. MAN AND GOVERNMENT	3
Myths and Techniques	3
One Man Is Not Much Stronger than Another	12
II. THE BREEDING GROUND	22
The Family As Realm	22
From Family to State	31
III. THE MYTH OF AUTHORITY	39
Myth and Society	39
Institutionalization of the Central Myth	42
Transformation of the Central Myth	51

PART TWO

THE BASES OF AUTHORITY

IV. THE FIRMAMENT OF LAW	61
Government and Law	61
How and Why Men Obey	73
V. THE PYRAMID OF POWER	82
Back to Definitions	82
The Nature of Social Power	87
Diverse Forms of the Pyramid of Power	97
The Control of Power	107

CHAPTER	PAGE
VI. PROPERTY AND STATUS	114
Status and Social Class	114
Government and Property	125

PART THREE

THE FORMS OF GOVERNMENT

VII. CONSPECTUS OF THE FORMS OF GOVERNMENT ..	147
The Major Forms	147
Transitory and Ascendant Forms	162
VIII. THE WAYS OF DEMOCRACY	175
The Coming of Democracy	175
The Community and the State	192
Organization of Opinion	208
IX. THE WAYS OF DICTATORSHIP	225
In What Respect All Dictatorships Are Alike	225
The Latin-American Type	233
The Fascist and Nazi Types	243
The Soviet Dictatorship	255

PART FOUR

THE TRANSFORMATIONS OF GOVERNMENT

X. REVOLUTION AND TRANSFORMATION.....	269
Revolution	269
The Processes Beneath	287
The Changing Peoples	299
XI. THE TRANSFORMATIONS OF FUNCTION	314
The Business of Government	314
Cultural Functions	322
General-welfare Functions	331
Functions of Economic Control	340

CONTENTS

ix

CHAPTER	PAGE
XII. STATE OVER AGAINST STATE	360
The Significance of State Boundaries	360
The State as War-maker	368
Approach to International Order	386

PART FIVE

CONCLUSIONS ON THE THEORY OF GOVERNMENT

XIII. THE UNIT AND THE UNITY	403
The Opposing Doctrines	403
Man and Society	410
The Multi-group Society	421
The Social Mechanism	430
Beyond the Realm of Government	439
COMMENTARY	447
INDEX	485

PART ONE

THE EMERGENCE OF GOVERNMENT

CHAPTER ONE

MAN AND GOVERNMENT

I

MYTHS AND TECHNIQUES

When the scientists classified man as *Homo sapiens*, man the knowing one, the specific adjective was a kind of ornamental flourish. It was not used to separate man from other species of the genus *Homo*, for there are no other species. It was applied in effect to distinguish man from all other animals. Man is one of the primates, his nearest relations being the anthropoid apes. From them he has changed through the long obscure reaches of human evolution. His brain is much heavier. He walks erect. He has free hands and opposable thumbs. His forehead is advanced. But the organic pattern is the same. Cells, organs, structures of every kind, "all are practically identical in man and the higher mammals." Nevertheless scientists, recognizing that a difference of degree may be more crucial than a difference of kind, erected a separate genus for man and named its solitary species the knowing animal.

From the beginnings of human reflection man has been aware that herein lay his title to eminence. It is said darkly in the book of *Genesis* that our first parents broke the rules and ate of the tree of knowledge. The poets and philosophers of ancient Greece paid many tributes to the knowingness of man. Perhaps the finest of these is found in an ode in the *Antigone* of Sophocles, part of which may be freely translated as follows: